enough details about the permitted foreign participation in basic telecom sector in other countries is not available with the Government. As such it is difficult to make comparison.

(c) No Sir. Provision of basic telephone service on telecom circle basic requires huge capital investment which can be made only by financially sound companies. Government wants to ensure that only financially sound and serious players enter this area. The tender conditions provide for bidding only by Indian companies. Such Indian companies may have equity participation from foreign companies.

(d) Question does not arise in view of (a) to (c) above.

(e) No Sir. Interest of self-reliance and national security have been taken into consideration, in the terms and conditions formulated.

Pay-phones to handicapped and weaker sections in Gujarat

1259. SHRIMATI ANANDIBEN JETHABHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any "Pay Phone" connections have been allotted in Gujarat;

(b) if so, the details of such connections given to SCs/STs handicapped and economically weaker sections, separately, togetherwith the places.

(c) whether any irregularities have been noticed in the allotment of these telephones conctions, and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) and (b) STD PCOs are franchised to educated unemployed who fulfil the eligibility conditions prescribed. Preferential categories include SCs/STs and handicapped. No separate records indicating the pieces of installation of PCOs franchised to physically handicapped and SCs/STs are however maintained.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of reply to (c) above.

Consortium value added services

1260. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:
SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any efforts are being made by Government to pool the resources of Government Departments like DOT, DOE and the Railways as well as public sector bodies like ITI, Hindustan Teleprinters, C-DOT etc., to launch a consortium which will have the potential of beating a major player in the market for value-added services;

(b) if so the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) No Sir, there ir no such proposal under consideration.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) One of the thrusts of liberalisation in Telecom service is to encourage participation of private sector in providing services